

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
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KOYAMA TO ADDRESS MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

A Kyodan missionary from Japan will speak to Kyodan missionaries to Japan at the annual Kyodan-related Missionaries Conference to be held in Tozanso, Gotemba, March 27-29.

Dr. Kosuke Koyama, 43, was a missionary professor at the Seminary of the United Church of Christ in Thailand from 1960-68. He is presently Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia in Singapore, editor of the South East Asia Journal of Theology, and chairman of the East Asia Christian Conference committee on conversations with conservative evangelicals.

Koyama is known as an outspoken proponent of the indigenization of the Gospel, as is evidenced in his book, Water Buffalo Theology. He is, to some extent, "a prophet without honor in his own country," his sharp criticism of Japanese theologians for their dependency upon European and American sources making him not too popular in Japan.

In addition to three lectures by Koyama, the conference program will feature the first English performance of "Mansion of Roses" (Bara no Yakata) by Shusaku Endo, author of the bestseller Chinmoku (Silence), with the author present to discuss elements of indigenization in his works. Discussion circles will take up such issues as Women's Lib, Japanese and Jew, Christianity and Zen, the Kyodan, Ecology and the Energy Crisis, and the Holy Spirit Movement.

A woodcarving of the "Footwashing" (John 13) by Sapporo missionary Rudy Kuyten, in the style of the Ainu carvers of Hokkaido, will be used to illustrate the theme of the Conference: "Are we with you, Lord?"



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE LOOKS AHEAD TO BILL TO CONVENE ASSEMBLY

The Kyodan Executive Committee, meeting in Tokyo February 15-16, voted to prepare a bill concerning the convening of the 17th General Assembly to be presented to the next session of the Executive Committee, which will be held immediately following the March Consultation on the Confession of Faith. The Assembly, originally scheduled for 1970, has been postponed due in part to the inability of four districts to hold assemblies and elect delegates to the General Assembly.

FROM MONASTERY TO MINISTRY:

(hp)

REV. TOSHIHIRO TAKAMI

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Professor, Tsurukawa Rural Institute
Associate Executive Director, NCCJ Division of Service
Interviewer, Missionary Pre-Furlough Vocational Interview Service

Education: Doane College, Nebraska, B.A. 1956
Yale University Divinity School, B.D. 1960
Fuller Theological Seminary, Graduate School of World Mission, M.A. 1969

Experience: Monk, Zen Monastery, Kyoto
Instructor, Far Eastern Language Institute, Yale University
Editorial Staff, The Mainichi Newspaper (English)
Parish Minister, Kyodan churches in the Kansai
School of Pastoral Care, Winston-Salem, N.C.

The first time I called Tom for an interview, he was about to leave for Bangladesh, his fourth trip in the past 14 months, first in connection with disaster relief, then for rehabilitation planning following the end of the war of independence.

Upon his return he met with the press, reporting what he had seen and his hopes for the future, with journalistic clarity, vividness and sensitivity--and good pictures.

I interviewed Tom a few days later, beginning with the question that had sparked our original interest:

How come you were in a Zen monastery?

My parents were poor. They could not afford to send me to school beyond the sixth grade, but a Buddhist foundation provided three or four scholarships a year to boys who qualified. The students lived in the monastery as student monks but were not required to become priests. I was one of those boys and lived in the monastery for five years while attending public middle school.

I left the monastery when I graduated from middle school. It was the climax of the war, and it was difficult to continue one's studies. I enlisted, specialized in radio, and was assigned to install electronic equipment on battleships in Tokyo.

The monastery experience seems to have been accidental. Did it have any influence on you?

Yes, very much. It gave me an appreciation of the ascetic way of life. The practice of Zen is not as much a matter of sitting still as of taking time to be calm, and this has become part of my way of life--even when I'm riding a train or am in the busy office. It doesn't mean to become inactive.

And because of this appreciation of the ascetic life--meditation and seeking solitary moments--I appreciate the presence of others all the more.

Probably when I say this I am mixing up my Christian orientation, for even though I say I feel the Zen experience was a good influence, I cannot think of my present--or my past--life without seeing it through the "eyes of faith."

"Eyes of faith"? When did this take place?

I began to work as a cook and houseboy for a missionary teacher at Kobe College, Albert Faurot (who now teaches at Silliman University in the Philippines). I was impressed by his quiet personality. As I remember it, he didn't invite me to go to church or tell me to go. I asked him to take me.

I was impressed by the sermons, but what influenced me most--and caused me to change--was reading the Bible itself, especially the Gospel of John. I had several deep spiritual experiences while reading the Scriptures:

One day

I was sweeping up the leaves
under the trees
on the Kobe campus
to build a fire
for the ofuro (bath).
I started the fire
and squatted down beside it
to read.

While I was reading,
suddenly
I felt I was completely exposed.
The Word of God
was speaking
to me.

There was
no place to hide.
I felt filled with fear--
but a special kind of fear--
fear because I was fully known.

(After this experience, Tom asked to join the church and was baptized, although he felt he had already been baptized by the Spirit and the formal rite was unnecessary.)

Now, as a Christian living in faith, I feel God has known me even before I realized it, throughout my life as a Buddhist and even as a Navy man. I came to know Him at this particular time. He prepared me to see Him in his own particular way.

I was helped to go to college by a missionary, and I have had many different kinds of experiences. Now I am helping people in Southeast Asia, a task for which God has prepared me, knowing both my weaknesses and my strengths.

Your testimony seems a witness to personal salvation yet you are obviously deeply involved in social ministries. How do you view these approaches to the Christian life?

I think the "person" is central but not in an individualistic way. Real "personal salvation" comes as man is reconciled to God and to his fellowmen. That is why I am very keen on the social involvement of the church.

To emphasize just "personal salvation" is one-sided. Paul says in I. Cor. 9: "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." There is no salvation-in-isolation for me.

I was invited to study at the college in Nebraska with the help of church youth groups. A college group raised funds for my college expenses and my tuition at Yale. I was influenced by many friends in the United States. The decision

of "the group" led to my becoming a minister--you might say, "God called. I was responding with the rest of the gang--the People of God."

Do you think Christians can learn anything from Zen?

One thing is discipline. I think we Protestants need a new monastic type of discipline in order to live in the "secular city." I don't mean sitting still and meditating but discipline in the conduct of our lives.

In Christian terms, this is "to be in the world but not of the world." The insights we get from Zen may be very useful. It isn't contradictory to the Christian faith. And it should not be a means of escape from the world, for that is not what it is.

Paul's saying "in Christ everything is 'Yes'" speaks to me. Really, my faith in Christ gives Zen and all Buddhism a meaningful part in human history. In Christ everything becomes meaningful. At least, that is how I look at history because I have been converted to the Christian faith.

As we left the interview, NCC General Secretary Nakajima came by to report that an organization that had read Tom's report on Bangladesh had just telephoned to say that they wanted to recruit 30 young people for the short-term agricultural program Tom is suggesting.

In his quiet, low-pitched way, Tom Takami is involved with key issues in the world today: Christianity's relation to other religions - Japanese responsibility in Asia - the fullness of the Gospel...



A RESIDENCE HOME for women pastors, pastors' widows, Bible women and other Christian workers entering semi-retirement is being established by the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies. A seaside site has been purchased in Chiba. The building will eventually accommodate 30

persons although in its first stages it will accommodate 10 persons. Meeting rooms will be available for outside groups. It is anticipated that the women will continue to contribute to society through gardening, classes for the community, handwork, etc. Funds toward the total cost of ¥52,400,000 (\$170,000) for land and construction are being raised by Kyodan women's societies. The original efforts were bolstered considerably by a gift from United Methodist women in the United States.

what has been --- I N T H E K Y O D A N --- what is to be

I. Coming Events

Kyodan-related Missionary Conference to be held March 27-29 at
Gotemba (News Letter 2/20)

Kyodan Consultation around Confession of Faith to be held March 13-15
at Amagisanso

II. Recent Events

Districts

Tohoku district starts study of standard of pastors' salary and mutual
assistance plan (Shimpo 2/5)

Mine Church issues Chugakusei Times for junior high school students
(Shimpo 1/29)

Ecumenicity

Week of Prayer for Unity is observed in local services (Tsushin 2/4)

Evangelism

Evangelism Comm. meet Jan. 20-21 to discuss pioneer evangelism, small
churches, sokatsu, etc. (Shimpo 2/5)

History

Yokohama Kaigan Church--first Protestant Church in Japan--celebrates
centennial of founding (Shimbun 1/22)

Kyodan

District moderators meet Feb. 14-15, reporting reactions to sokatsu
Districts, Kyodan committees discuss Moderator's sokatsu (Shimpo 2/12)

Feb. 15-16 Exec. Comm. votes to prepare bill on convening of General
Assembly for presentation to next executive meeting, after Confes-
sion Consultation

Kyodan Normalization Group's statement affirms centrality of Confes-
sion and need for an orderly assembly (Shimpo 2/12, Shimbun 2/5, 12)

Missionaries

Missionaries meet in Tokyo and Kansai to discuss Moderator's sokatsu
(Shimpo 2/19)

Okinawa

Okinawa Christian College asks for contributions of books (Shimbun 2/12)

Overseas

Takami reports on trip to Bangladesh (Shimbun 2/5)

People

Rev. Tosaji Ohara, famous Holiness pastor of Yodobashi Church, dies
(Shimbun 2/12)

Research Institute

Research Institute sponsors study of "legal" and "illegal" (Shimpo 1/29)

Social Concerns

Rumors of changed LDP strategy on Yasukuni nationalization bill keep
Social Concerns Comm. on alert (Shimpo 2/12)

Kitakyushu ecumenical group starts fund-raising campaign to establish
home for mentally retarded children (Shimbun 2/12)

Korean Church in Japan issues statement opposing direction of current
immigration legislation (Shimpo 2/19)

Seven organizations visit Diet members to express opposition to
Yasukuni Shrine nationalization (Shimbun 2/12, Shimpo 2/19)